



# Emergency Management **UPDATE**

May 2000

## Conference strikes 'accord' with EMs

**S**tormy skies couldn't extinguish the spark of unity kindled during the 2000 Virginia Emergency Management Conference held March 20-22 in Williamsburg, Va.

For the 354 participants, "Igniting the Power of Partnerships" was more than a theme. It was a call to action that began with the opening session.

As he praised emergency managers for their response to multiple crises in late 1999 and early 2000, Virginia Secretary of Public Safety Gary Aronhalt also encouraged participants to "think out of the box."

"You have to ask yourselves what you could have done differently to lessen the impact of these disasters," said Aronhalt. "You may have the answer and can share it with your colleagues."

Wakefield National Weather Service Office Meteorologist Bill Sammler set the stage by introducing a two-part panel discussion on Hurricane Floyd response and recovery with a nod to a major supporting player in a drama whose outcome was as devastating as it was difficult to forecast.

"Floyd's impact would not have been possible without Dennis," said Sammler. "The soil was completely saturated from a continuous 13-day accumulation of rainfall from Dennis and other rainstorms. The Blackwater River basin was one of the areas significantly affected."

Franklin City Manager Rowland "Bucky" Taylor echoed the theme in discussing their response to the widespread flooding. He emphasized the importance of mutual aid agreements, the Local Emergency Management Operations Course (LEMOC) and other tabletop exercises.

"The first 48-72 hours were the closest to hell we have ever encountered," said Taylor. "We needed the whole community



*We have ignition ... Dynamic speakers and networking opportunities were the hallmarks of the 2000 Virginia Emergency Management Conference.*

to come together to be ready for the help when it arrived. A major coordination effort directing the efforts of various agencies involved is mandatory for sanity's sake — yours and theirs."

Southampton County Administrator Mike Johnson provided the local perspective on Floyd recovery challenges, which included restoration of the highway network, graves detail, debris management, and temporary and long-term housing.

Bob Mitchell, President of Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), then reiterated the vital role volunteers can play in the recovery process, providing everything from food to funding sources. He said many member organizations are willing to make long-term commitments, and VOAD is ready and willing to partner with localities.

Other types of weather phenomena sparked discussion as well with general sessions on heat, drought and lightning safety and a luncheon presentation on

recent Oklahoma City tornadoes. Emergency Management Coordinators Dan Hall (Salem) and Tom Hajduk (Prince William County) indicated these topics were particularly useful on a local level.

"I've already shared the lightning safety information with our Salem Parks and Recreation Department staff," says Hall. "We are going to get together to review the city's policy to determine where we are now and what we may need to tweak to provide the safest possible environment for our athletic events."

The conference also featured an exhibit hall with 27 vendors providing displays/demonstrations on a variety of topics.

Yet, the workshops and networking opportunities scored the highest with attendees. With small group sessions on topics such as dam safety, alternate communications pathways, power restoration and school safety, participants could tailor a program to meet individual needs.

*(continued on page 4)*

# Dialogue needed to prevent dam failures

by Joseph S. Haugh, PE

Director of Dam Safety, Va. Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR)

Virginia has over 1,500 lakes created by dams made by human hands and equipment. Although most of these dams are small, many are nevertheless capable of killing people if they were to fail.

In fact, failures of small dams have resulted in more fatalities than failures of large dams. Fortunately, dams do not fail very often. However, when they do, the results can be devastating.

Of Virginia's 1,500-plus dams, 489 are under the jurisdiction of the Virginia Dam Safety Act. The others, including over 100 high or significant hazard potential dams, are exempted for various reasons.

Regardless of regulatory authority, the owner of each dam is responsible for its safety. Over half the dams in the state are privately owned, and most owners do not have the engineering or financial resources at their disposal for dam safety purposes.

Many earthen dams including several in so-called "lakefront communities" have begun to degrade over time. Hurricane Floyd recently focused attention on this issue as at least 10 small dams breached and many others were threatened by floodwaters in several localities.

As emergency managers, each of you has a golden opportunity to raise the visibility of this issue in your communities. Here's how you can help:

**Know the territory.** Each regulated dam in Virginia is required to have a plan for operation and maintenance, regular inspections and an Emergency Action Plan (EAP). A copy of the EAP must be filed with the local emergency coordinator and the Department of Emergency Services. I am not naive enough to suspect that the filing of these plans means that they are adequately coordinated.

The real questions that we should be asking are "How effective is the plan?" or "Will it work under emergency conditions?" Ideally, I would like to see the local emergency manager involved with the development of each EAP so that all parties are aware of the usefulness of these emergency action plans.



***Safety first.** Owned by the Division of State Parks, the Swift Creek Dam is regulated by the VDCR.*

For nonregulated dams, find out where they are, their potential for hazard and what is needed for their safety.

**Test the Waters.** As you work with owners on developing the EAP, you might also suggest and facilitate periodic exercises to test this plan. Some issues simply cannot be anticipated ahead of time and exercising is a good way to spot shortcomings and make improvements.

I have heard dam owners across the country emphasize the value of exercising their EAP under nonstressful conditions. I have never heard of a case in which they were not able to make needed improvements after this test. In fact, they were glad to find these shortcomings before an actual emergency occurred.

**Chart Your Course.** Most emergency managers would like a map showing the area of a possible impact of a dam failure. Though we try to encourage their use, maps showing this potential impact area are not included in all EAPs.

Most people responsible for evacuating citizens from an impending flood wave don't care about the engineering intricacies involved in developing such a map.

I see no need to apologize for being overly conservative in creating a map if detailed information is not available. The

important thing is to convey the area that could be in danger to those responsible for evacuation or warning. If you don't have a map, get one. In many cases, a simple "sketch map" may be sufficient.

Many dams have been in place for many years and then supposedly "suddenly" failed. The truth is a number of these failures were not necessarily sudden at all. The conditions leading up to the failure often went undetected because no one was paying attention.

Dams need to be recognized as a part of our nation's and our state's infrastructure. They can be a very dangerous part if they are not given the attention needed.

We must pay more attention to this issue, beginning with increased dialogue between dam owners, emergency managers, local communities and state regulators. Feel free to contact me at (804) 786-1369 with any questions about dam safety in your area.

**Editor's Note:** On May 31, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is sponsoring the first **National Dam Safety Awareness Day** with a ceremony set to coincide with the anniversary of the 1889 Johnstown flood (the worst flood in U.S. history caused by a dam failure). Learn more on the FEMA Web site at [www.fema.gov/mit/ndspweb.htm](http://www.fema.gov/mit/ndspweb.htm).

## In the Spotlight



The Virginia General Assembly recognized amateur radio contributions to the Hurricane Floyd response with a joint resolution presented at the state Capitol earlier this year.

Passed unanimously in the House and Senate, the resolution applauded the "widest geographical and longest-running" Amateur Radio Emergency Service/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (ARES/RACES) activation in Virginia's history with nearly 150 volunteers putting in some 9,500 hours of duty to help coordinate emergency operations in the city of Franklin.



# Hazmat certification redefined

By Ron Hargrave, Technological Hazards Training Supervisor



FEMA News Photos

by Liz Roll

In February, I gave you a preview of modifications to hazmat training for 2000 and beyond. Now, it is time to share some significant changes to the "Specialist" program that have redefined what it means to become "certified" at this level.

Before discussing these specifics, I think it is important for everyone involved to fully understand Technological Hazards Training Branch's mindset on what qualification and certification for hazmat training actually means.

As a certified hazmat responder, an individual is expected to perform the job in a highly competent manner. "Certified" in this regard means that an individual has fulfilled all the requirements and may practice in the field.

In order to be certified at any level of hazmat response, the individual must demonstrate that he or she has mastered the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) required by the professional standards.

Certification should not be granted based solely on training in fundamental knowledge and skills. Mastery of these KSAs requires both training and field experience.

The individual should earn certification by demonstrating the ability to apply knowledge and skill in a safe and effective manner in a variety of situations and work conditions. It is this balanced combination of training and experience that allows the individual to develop the ability to perform professionally at a hazmat incident.

Based on the belief that both elements are necessary to be "certified" as a hazmat responder, the training branch will begin to incorporate the requirement for applicants to document an appropriate level of field experience as well as complete required classroom training.

Changes to the Technician and Specialist programs are listed in the chart at right. Please call our office at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6572, to learn more about the requirements for certification or recertification (including class order).

## Brown set to helm VDES outreach programs



VDES welcomes new Public Affairs Coordinator Rohn M. Brown who joined the agency in April to spearhead the disaster preparedness and community education outreach programs.

No stranger to emergency management, he previously served as Technical Assistance Coordinator for the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Emergency Medical Services, for nine years.

Brown holds a bachelor of science degree in business administration from Longwood College and a masters of education from the University of Virginia and has 12 years' experience in media

relations, marketing and publicity. Brown has created workshops to enhance the leadership and management skills of EMS offices throughout the Commonwealth and produced targeted campaigns to help recruit members for the state's volunteer rescue squads. He has also developed a close working relationship with local government officials.

As he puts those skills to work for emergency managers, Brown will not only develop and market the tornado, hurricane and winter preparedness campaigns but also work with local governments to help establish or enhance their community outreach programs.

He is eager to work with each of you and can be reached at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6519.

### Hazmat Technician

#### Prerequisites:

- ☐ Certified Hazardous Materials First Responder – Operations for 12 months
- ☐ An active member of an emergency response agency (public or private)

#### Training:

Complete the present 80-hour Hazmat Technician course

#### Experience:

- ☐ Serve one year as an active Hazmat Response Team member
- ☐ Documentation of technician level work performed at an incident or approved tactical drill (Work performed must include being a member of the entry team, donning and working in Chemical Protective Equipment, and being decontaminated.)

Implementation: July 2000



### Hazmat Specialist \*

#### Prerequisites:

Certified Hazmat Technician (one year)

#### Training:

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hazmat Chemistry                                       | <b>80 hrs</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adv. Tactical Control (ATC) for Highway and Intermodal | <b>32 hrs</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ATC Railroad   | <b>16 hrs</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ATC Marine   | <b>16 hrs</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ATC Industrial   | <b>16 hrs</b> |

#### Experience:

Working as a Certified Hazmat Technician, document working at three incidents or approved tactical drills. Minimum performance must be:

- Member of an Entry Team including wearing and working in Chemical Protective Equipment and performing a tactical control task
- Decontamination Team member performing decon on entry personnel
- Research a hazardous material and assist in risk analysis and developing a tactical plan

Implementation: January 2001

\* Responders **currently certified at Hazmat Specialist** level can upgrade their certification by attending these continuing education courses over a five-year period:

- |                                     |               |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Risk Assessment & Incident Analysis | <b>8 hrs</b>  |
| ATC Marine                          | <b>16 hrs</b> |
| ATC Industrial                      | <b>16 hrs</b> |

# Training Calendar

## Emergency Management

**Disaster Response and Recovery Operations Course**  
May 9-11/Richmond

**Coordinator's Briefing**  
May 18/Abingdon

**Emergency Planning Workshop**  
June 6-8/Charlottesville

**Mass Fatalities Incident Mgmt.**  
June 20-22/Williamsburg

## Reservist Training

**Reservist Update Seminar**  
May 16/Roanoke

**Hazard Mitigation Refresher Course** — May 16/Roanoke

**Information and Planning Branch Workshops**  
June 1/Richmond

## Search and Rescue

**ASRC GSAR (Part I)**  
May 5-7/Winchester

**ASRC GSAR (Part II)**  
June 2-4/Winchester

## Technological Hazards

**Adv. Hazardous Materials Control** — May 15-19/Ashland

## VEM Conference (continued from page 1)

York County Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator Judi Riutort says the workshop on floodplain management and insurance was especially useful.

"It was pertinent to what is going on in our county because we are getting ready to implement the community rating system, and flood insurance is a focus this year for the Hurricane Expo," says Riutort.

"We are going to promote flood insurance — not just for

those who live in areas identified on flood maps. We are going to encourage everyone to get it."

Both VDES State Coordinator Michael Cline and newly inducted VEMA President Larry Smith agreed the event was a rousing success in terms of content and attendance.

"Everyone we talked to said they received information they could take back with them and use," said Smith. "There was a tremendous amount of net-

working — which is exactly what we hoped would happen. The workshops either identified problems or helped to solve them."

The 2001 Virginia Emergency Management Conference will be held at the Williamsburg Marriott on March 14-16.

For more information about either event, contact Larry Smith at (804) 443-4331 or Mary Camp at (804) 897-6500, ext. 6525.

## Project Impact builds bridges in Virginia Beach

**T**he city of Virginia Beach garnered a wave of support for its efforts to become a more disaster resistant community with a March 23 Project Impact signing ceremony held at the Virginia Beach Pavilion.

Project Impact Coordinator Mark Piland says about 60 local corporate and nonprofit partners endorsed the document outlining the actions each party will take to reduce their locality's vulnerability to natural hazards and establishing the Virginia Beach Project Impact Partnership.

FEMA Region III Director Rita Calvan and VDES State Coordinator Michael Cline joined Virginia Beach Mayor Meyera Oberndorf in signing the document as representatives of the federal/state/local triumvirate so critical to the program's success.

Timed to coincide with Hurricane Expo 2000, the ceremony was held in conjunction with the Tidewater Builders' Association Home and Garden Show. The expo featured safe room and Hurricane House exhibits as well as presentations from a variety of speakers including Dr. Steve Lyons, Hurricane Expert from the Weather Channel. Piland says about 21,000 people attended the the show as a whole. For more information, contact Mark Piland at (757) 427-8713 .



*Partners pledge support. (Left to right) Marian Sanders, Mark Marchbank and Deputy Chief J.W. Carter add their signatures.*



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